

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed on April 16, 2007 has been received and its contents carefully noted. From the Summary page, claims 1, 3, 4, 6-9 and 12-26 were pending. Claims 9 and 12-18 are allowed. Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-8, 19-21 and 23-26 are indicated as rejected. An objection was made to claim 11 for reciting allowable subject matter but depending upon a rejected base claim. Again, acceptance of Applicants' Drawings filed October 6, 2005 and acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority has been made. Further, the Information Disclosure Statement filed December 20, 2008 has been considered.

As an initial matter, Applicants seek clarification on the Summary page regarding the objection to claim 11. Claim 11 has been canceled. The Examiner most likely intended to object to claim 22. Acknowledgement in the next action is kindly solicited.

By this response, clarifying amendments have been made to claim 1 so that the subject matter may further patentably distinguish over the cited prior art.

In view of the amendments, *supra*, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 3-4, 6-9 and 12-26 stand in Condition for Allowance.

35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) – Claim Rejections

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-8, 19-21 and 23-26 stand rejected as being unpatentable over Murakami (US 5,462,603) in view of Sotodani et al. (JP2000-173750), Johnsgard et al. (US 6,342,691), and Mizuno et al. (US 6,129,046). The rejection as to claims 1, 3, 4, 6-8, 19-21 and 23-26 is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1, as amended, recites:

“A support table structure comprising:

a support table, for supporting a workpiece... provided with a heating means for heating the workpiece; and

a support post standing on the bottom of the processing vessel and supporting the support table;

characterized by a heat-resistant upper surface covering member, a heat-resistant side surface covering member and a heat-resistant lower surface covering member respectively covering an upper, a side and a lower surface of the support table, and a heat-resistant, opaque back cover disposed under the lower surface of the support table, and

an upper surface of a peripheral part of the upper surface covering member is contiguously covered with a part of the side surface covering member, the peripheral part of the upper surface covering member being connected with the side surface covering member so as to enclose the heating means."

Applicants' claimed table structure is neither taught nor suggested by the asserted combination of Murakami, Sotodani, Johnsgard and Mizuno. Therefore, amended claim 1 patentably distinguishes thereover.

In order to ensure full appreciation of the claimed features, Applicants make reference to their exemplary support table structure as illustrated in FIGs. 2 and 4. In FIG. 4, an upper surface of a peripheral part of the upper surface covering member 272 is contiguously covered with a part of the side surface covering member 274. See pg. 16, ll. 17-31. That is, upper member 272 and side member 274 are in actual contact; they must touch. As claim 1 continues, the peripheral part of the upper surface covering member 272 connects to the side surface covering member 274 to provide a structure enclosing the heating means.

The Office Action purportedly to relies upon Mizuno likewise to teach (the upper surface of) a peripheral part of an upper surface of the covering member contiguously covered by a part of the side covering member. However, Mizuno teaches, to those of ordinary skill in the art, that there is a gap between the peripheral part of the upper surface covering member and the opposing part of the side surface covering member 38. See FIG. 1. Because Mizuno's apparatus has such a gap between the upper and side surface members, these two members are not contiguous. They do not touch. Therefore, amended claim 1 structurally distinguishes thereover.

Moreover, Mizuno indicates that this gap between the peripheral part of the upper surface covering member and the part of the side surface covering member 38 is necessary for blowing off purging gas. See col. 5, ll. 1-7. Thus, one having ordinary skill in the art would not have been led from Mizuno's teachings to have provided contiguous contact between the upper surface and the side surface covering members in the way that Applicants claim. None of Murakami, Sotodani or Johnsgard teach this claimed feature of Applicants' structure. Therefore, the combination of Murakami, Sotodani, Johnsgard and Mizuno fails to teach or suggest Applicants' arrangement of amended claim 1. As such, amended claim 1 patentably

distinguishes thereover. Therefore, Applicants courteously seek reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection as to claim 1 and claims 3, 4, 6-8, 19-21 and 23-26, dependent thereon.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejections have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

If any fees under 37 C. F. R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17 are due in connection with this filing, please charge the fees to Deposit Account No. 02-4300, Order No. 033082M282.

Respectfully submitted,
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